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### SKETCHES FROM JAPANESE DESIGNS.

UPON the opposite page we give a number of Japanese designs selected from a small volume of patterns made up in Japan for the use of native artists. The diversity of ideas shown, and the multitude of suggestions thrown out in designs, give them a value that our own decorators will, no doubt, appreciate.

Pertinent to the illustrations, and interesting as concerning Japanese work generally, we quote the following from Christopher Dresser's work, *Japan*:

We shall scarcely understand Japanese art unless we remember that the Japanese are a simple and humorous people. They enjoy a joke as much as a child, and there is a simplicity about their manners which has all the frankness of infancy. Indeed, we have here the charm of childhood preserved in grown man. This being the case, we must look for the expression of humor in their art, whenever opportunity occurs; and humor and grotesqueness are closely allied.

Teapots made in the form of birds, frogs, and fruits, owe their origin to this sense of humor; and a thousand things might be named as illustrating in Japanese art this love of the comic. The battle of the frogs, the grasshoppers' proces-

appears that Japanese children learn drawing almost without being aware that they are doing so. While children are learning to form the letters of the alphabet and the numerals they are also learning to draw. After a few weeks of school life they have acquired the power of making certain shapes (called letters and figures). Here their education in drawing ceases with us, unless they should at some future time be taught to draw as a separate accomplishment. The Japanese not only employ a native alphabet, but they also use a large number of Chinese characters—a number so great that Mr. Sato (the well-known Japanese scholar), though acquainted with six thousand such characters, said that he had never seen a native newspaper without finding some that he did not understand.

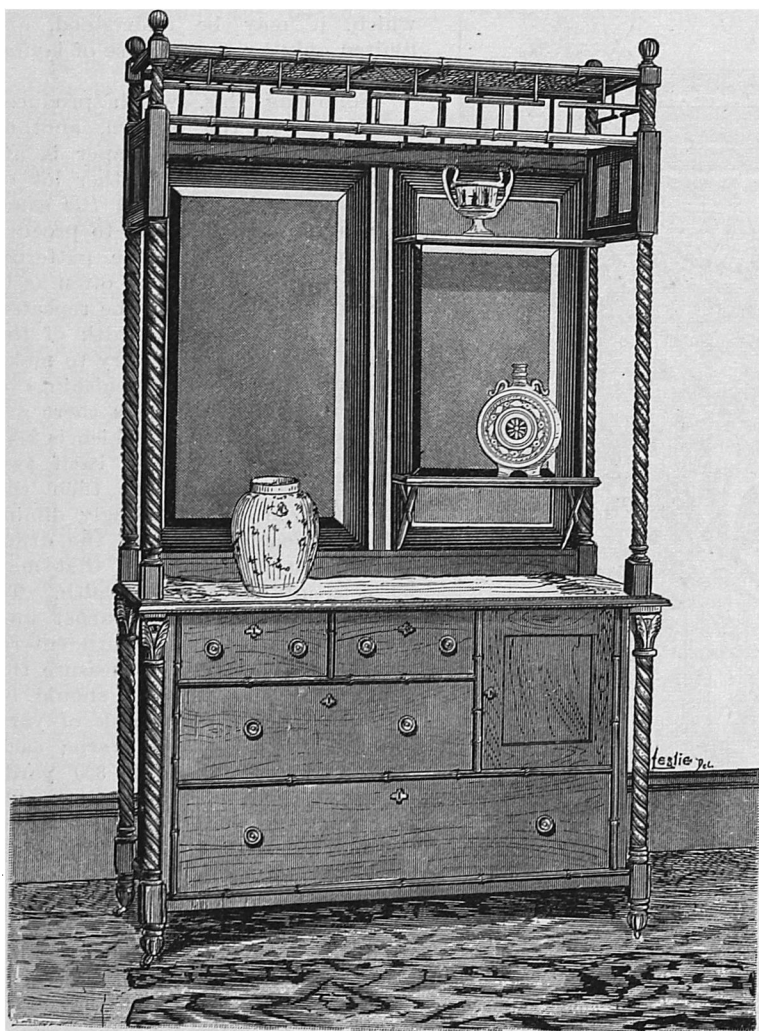
When we consider that writing is only a means for the communication of ideas, the vast amount of time consumed in acquiring such a power can only be deplored. Yet it has a great advantage; for in imitating new characters during every day of his school life, the Japanese child is constantly learning to draw. Again, the child never rests the paper on which it writes upon a desk or table, but holds it in the hand. Thus the whole arm works and not the hand only. Motion is got from the shoulder, the elbow, and the wrist alike. Another feature in the education of the Japanese child which is calculated to influence the

and however minute his work—and no people can draw more minutely or with greater tenderness than the Japanese—the lines are drawn with a brush, and the hand has nothing to rest upon.

The absorbent character of the Japanese paper not only gives precision of touch, but also leads to the simplest form being chosen for the expression of an object. The Japanese thus acquires knowledge of the value of touches, such as no other people possess.

Another merit of Japanese drawing is its crispness of touch, or angularity. Rounded lines, if used in a sketch, generally produce feebleness of effect, whereas angularity in drawing gives vigor and life.

Thus far we have only spoken of sketching in black and white, and have made no mention of painting in its truer sense; but Japan knows no art similar to that by which we produce our great pictures. The Japanese have no method of "working up" an effect; they cannot heap up labor upon a subject, and cover a canvas with color as we do. Indeed the best Japanese art consists of perfect sketches, and not of works which we call "finished." As sketches some of the Japanese colored drawings are beyond all praise. They are vigorous, simple, and life-like; while the color is distributed with the greatest possible care and understanding—understanding of quantities, understanding of harmonies, under-



ANGLO-JAPANESE BEDROOM FURNITURE, BY BRADSTREET, THURBER & CO.

sion, and such subjects, are so well known that we need not here enumerate them.

Many Japanese patterns have a significance to those for whom they are intended which is not apparent to us. Thus the almond is the type of beauty, and the stork (which is said to live a thousand years) of long life. In Japan a dead stork is as rare as a dead donkey is here. The tortoise is another emblem of longevity, for it is said to have a thousand lives, and another is the peach, for a man who lived for nine hundred years ate this fruit as his chief food.

The pictorial artist avails himself of the utmost variety, but the decorative artist has often to seek simple and symmetrical forms.

The Japanese well know the value of simplicity and even symmetry in decorative objects, and the flowers which seem to be pictorially grouped in their best carvings will almost invariably be found to have symmetrical halves or to consist of regular radiating parts. The same remark will apply to the leaves, while in both cases the simplest expression of the object copied is always given.

From Japanese architecture, ornament, and carving, we must turn to their drawing, and seek to understand their methods of work, for there is much worthy of our best consideration in the results achieved by Japanese artists, as well as in the means by which the end is gained. To me it

character of his work, should he ultimately become an artist, is the fact of his writing with a brush, and not with a pen or point. Then the paper on which he writes is more or less bibulous, so that the instant he touches the paper with his brush the ink (always Indian ink) is absorbed.

This writing with the brush, and this unrestrained use of the arm, gives a freeness to Japanese drawing which can never be got by practice with the point; while the absorbent quality of the paper induces a precision of touch which our method fails to secure. And this power of drawing, this freeness of motion, and this precision of touch, are all got without the child even knowing that he is acquiring the most valuable aids to a high drawing power.

To me our method of teaching drawing seems altogether wrong. We first give to a youth a hard point and teach him to imitate forms by the agency of this unpliant pencil. After he has got into the way of using this hard point we give him a brush, which he naturally uses as though it were something hard and unyielding. He should first use the brush, and when he has acquired its free use he might then be trusted with the crayon or the pencil. By this means he would gain the free use of the point and the brush; whereas by our method the free use of both is impaired.

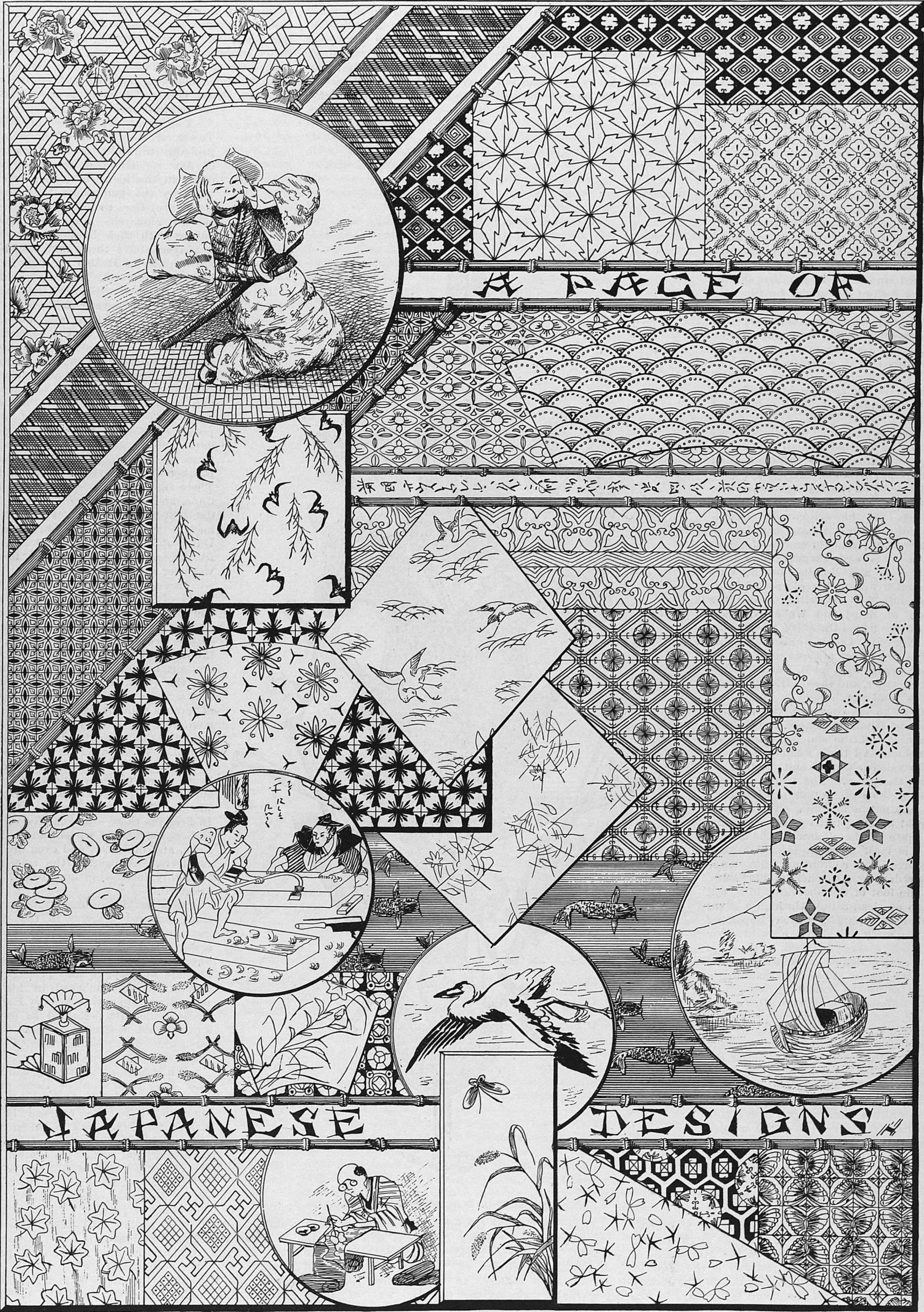
Their method of writing leads the Japanese artists to dispense altogether with the maulstick,

standing of the value of shades. Japanese drawings are at best but sketches; but though I am a sincere lover of our own school of pictorial art, I have yet seen works by Japanese artists which I would prefer to many an English picture which has cost hundreds of pounds.

IN the drapery of the drawing-room there is scope for the production of graceful and artistic effects, and, as curtains rich and delicate in color and made of materials which hang in soft folds give just the finishing touches which blend the decorations of the room into one harmonious whole, so the harsh rep hangings in strong crude, crimsons or blues and greens destroy all delicacy of color and produce a discord which no amount of careful treatment in the tints of walls and woodwork can ever counteract.

WE do not want the parlor to be filled with stiff, uncomfortable furniture, nor do we want museums in which we fear to walk or move about, but we want pleasant, cheerful rooms, in which the collection of furniture and objects of art shall all tend to make the room comfortable and habitable, not a mere show room from which the coverings are to be removed only on some grand occasion.





SKETCHES FROM JAPANESE DESIGNS.  
OBTAINED THROUGH THE COURTESY OF MR. GEORGE R. HALM.